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The 'Life in the United Kingdom' Citizenship Test

Is It Unfit for Purpose?

Dr Thom Brooks
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**A report by Dr Thom Brooks of an independent review
of the uses of the test for British immigration policy**

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FOREWORD

by Dr Thom Brooks

The *Life in the United Kingdom* test attracts much attention by the press from a narrow and incomplete perspective. The test is most often portrayed as a kind of pub quiz where obscure questions are highlighted primarily for the purpose of entertaining readers rather than providing an engaged analysis. The standard view is the test sets a bar so high that few current British citizens would pass which raises concerns about whether it is appropriate to impose such a demand on those claiming citizenship. In the present political climate, there might also be an argument for maintaining a high standard to provide an additional means of immigration control. Whilst many British citizens might disagree with the kinds of facts tested, few are likely to favour redesigning the test so it becomes easier. Instead, the public might favour a test about knowledge of life in the United Kingdom that is fair, if still challenging. It is shocking that virtually all media commentary about the *Life in the UK* has come from British citizens that have neither sat the actual test, discussed the test with those who have sat it or experienced immigration anywhere first-hand.

This single-authored, independent report is the product of research informed by personal experiences. I left my native United States for the Republic of Ireland in 1999 and I have lived in the United Kingdom since 2001. I sat and passed the *Life in the UK* test in 2009 and became a British citizen in 2011. These experiences provide me with first-hand knowledge about the *Life in the UK* test in theory and practice as an immigrant to Britain. Over the years, I have spoken with dozens of immigrants to Britain who have sat the test to learn about their experiences and how they might contribute to the development of improvements to the test and immigration policy.

The fact that commentary about the *Life in the UK* test so rarely, if ever, engages with those who must pass it has contributed to major problems in its design and implementation. This is exacerbated by the failure of the Home Office to engage with new citizens after the test was launched to ensure the test was fit for purpose. The problems include a failure to recognize what immigrants should know about many practicalities about living in the United Kingdom that native citizens may overlook.

This report is part of my effort to contribute to the future design and development of the *Life in the UK* test in later editions. British citizenship has been an honour for me to achieve and I believe I have a duty to provide a constructive, yet critical, examination in this important area of public policy not only for the benefit of future immigrants, but, more importantly, for present citizens as well.

I must thank the dozens of people I have interviewed and discussed the test with over the years. I owe special thanks to Lord Bhikhu Parekh for any number of critical reflections that have brought greater clarity to conclusions drawn in this report.

Dr Thom Brooks

Durham University

13th June 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Life in the United Kingdom* test is an important part of British immigration policy attracting cross-party support. This report is the most comprehensive and rigorous examination of the test available. The report considers how the current edition compares with previous editions and it identifies several problems that should be addressed in a future edition. Whilst the third edition is an improvement over past editions in some areas, it is an opportunity lost more generally. The *Life in the UK* is unfit for purpose at present until several serious concerns are addressed.

Main conclusions

Impractical

The *Life in the UK* handbook claims it will help applicants 'integrate into society and play a full role in your local community' including 'a broad general knowledge' of British laws.¹ The *Life in the UK* test is presented as a test about living in the United Kingdom and the general practical knowledge required enabling successful integration and involvement.

However, the test fails to satisfy its own standard. Much of the problem lies with what has been removed from previous test editions. The current edition no longer requires knowledge about the NHS, educational qualifications, the subjects taught in schools, how to report a crime or contact an ambulance and other everyday knowledge it has been claimed all new citizens should know. Instead, applicants must know the age of Big Ben and the height of the London Eye (in feet and metres). My first conclusion is the test does not fulfil its aims of providing satisfactory information that will facilitate integration into society or general knowledge about British laws rendering the test impractical.

Inconsistent

The *Life in the UK* test is inconsistent about the information it requires from applicants. They need not know the number of Members of Parliament in the House of Commons any more, but they must continue to know the number of members representing constituents in the Welsh Assembly, Scottish Parliament and Northern Ireland Assembly. Applicants are required to know about all lower courts in the judiciary, but they need not know about the UK Supreme Court. Nor is the UK Supreme Court mentioned in the handbook. My second conclusion is the test is inconsistent about the information applicants are required to know.

Trivial pursuits

The test includes facts that are purely trivial and lack practical significance. One example concerns the following dates in the life of Sake Dean Mahomet that all applicants are required to know: birth (1759), first came to UK (1782), eloped to Ireland (1786), first curry house opened (1810) and death (1851) in addition to having to know the name of his wife (Jane Daly), his wife's nationality (Irish) and street location for his Hindoostane Coffee House (George Street, London).² My third

¹ Home Office (2013), *Life in the United Kingdom: A Guide for New Residents*, 3rd edition (London: TSO), p. 7.

² See Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 42.

conclusion is the test includes information that is purely trivial. It is possible that the test questions may include other purely trivial information such as the number of questions on the test and the names of chapters.

Gender imbalance

There is a clear gender imbalance with the test. The handbook's historical chapter provides the dates of birth for 29 men, but only four women. Neither of the Queen's birthdays is included. No women artists, musicians or poets receive any mention. There are also problems with diversity in other areas. My fourth conclusion is the test lacks gender balance and women receive much less attention than merited.

Already outdated

Some information for the test is already outdated. The handbook states that former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher is alive although she died about a fortnight after its publication. My fifth conclusion that the test is outdated is a problem that could have been avoided better by only including dates and other information that was necessary.

Ineffective strategy on English proficiency

My final conclusion specifically addresses the test as an indicator of English proficiency. Successful completion of the test has counted as satisfying the requirement that all applicants possess satisfactory English proficiency. This remains true for the new third edition, but only until October 2013 when an additional English language test may be required for some applicants. My sixth conclusion is that this change represents an ineffective strategy on several fronts. It will confirm all applicants passing the test today as having satisfied the English proficiency requirement, but not for all applicants passing the same test later this year. This is inconsistent and problematic. Furthermore, the requirement that some applicants pass a further test of English proficiency is subject to at least 10 caveats that render its practical implementation impractical and ineffective.

Need for reform

These conclusions raise serious problems with the current test that should concern the Government. This report does not conclude that the test should be abandoned. I recommend that the *Life in the UK* test should be reformed so that it is no longer impractical, inconsistent, trivial, gender imbalanced, outdated and ineffective. The test has become an integral part of immigration policy although it has evaded sufficiently close scrutiny. This critical report aims to expose the test's problems to shed light on how it can be reformed and improved further.

This report's conclusion provides 12 recommendations for a new, fourth edition of the *Life in the United Kingdom* handbook and test that will address problems found in the current edition.

INTRODUCTION

Background

The *Life in the United Kingdom* test has become an integral part of British immigration policy launched on 1st November 2005.³ All applicants for 'permanent settlement'⁴ or naturalisation require successful completion of tests demonstrating satisfactory English language proficiency and knowledge about British culture and institutions.⁵ There are two options for passing this requirement.⁶ The first option is to complete successfully a special ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) course (see **Annex A**).⁷ The second option is to pass the *Life in the United Kingdom* test. This report focuses exclusively on the *Life in the UK* test.

Over one million tests have been conducted since its introduction in 2005.⁸ About 150,000 people sat the *Life in the UK* test in 2012.⁹ Approximately 70% pass the test each year. Success rates vary widely by country of origin. One study found that Americans and Australians had a pass rate of about 98% while Bangladeshis and Turks had a pass rate of about 45%.¹⁰

The test has 24 multiple choice questions selected randomly. Applicants have 45 minutes to complete the test and must answer 18 or more (75%+) questions correctly to pass. Applicants can sit the test at about 60 test centres across the United Kingdom.¹¹ Applicants must register with a test centre online or by calling a UK Test Helpline.¹² A test can be taken no less than seven days from its booking.¹³ The test costs £50 and paid online after a test session is booked.¹⁴ Applicants must bring to the test centre appropriate photographic identification, such as a passport or British driving licence, and proof of address with a postcode, including a bank statement or utility bill.¹⁵

³ BBC News, 'New UK citizenship test starts', url: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/4391710.stm.

⁴ This is normally treated as 'Indefinite Leave to Remain'. See UK Border Agency, 'Settling in the UK', url: <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/settlement/>.

⁵ EU citizens are not required to apply for permanent settlement in order to be resident in the UK. If an EU citizen nonetheless applied for Indefinite Leave to Remain or British citizenship, he or she would normally be expected to satisfy the requirement of a test. See s33(1) of the Immigration Act 1971 and s49(3) of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009. There may be exceptions, such as for Republic of Ireland citizens: see s31 of the British Nationality Act 1981.

⁶ UK Border Agency, 'Demonstrating your knowledge of language and life in the UK', url: <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/settlement/knowledge-language-life/demonstrating/>.

⁷ This report focuses specifically on the *Life in the UK* test.

⁸ See Damian Green MP, Minister of State (Immigration), HC Debate, 29 February 2012, c318W.

⁹ Press Association (2013), 'UK Citizenship Test for Foreign Nationals is "Unfit for Purpose" says Academic', *Huffington Post*, url: http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/03/17/british-citizenship-test-unfit_n_2896938.html.

¹⁰ BBC News (2010), 'British citizenship test: One in three immigrants fails', url: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/8707152.stm.

¹¹ UK Border Agency, 'Life in the UK Test', url: <http://lifeintheuktest.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/>.

¹² See *ibid.* The Life in the UK Test Helpline is 0800 0154245.

¹³ UK Border Agency, 'Booking the Test: how do I book my test?', url: http://lifeintheuktest.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/htmlsite/booking_10.html.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.* Appropriate photographic identification includes originals of items such as a passport, British driving licence (with photo), European Union Identity Card, Immigration Status Document and Biometric Residence Permit. Appropriate proof of postcode includes originals of a gas, electricity or water bill; a Council Tax bill,

Test questions cover information in an official handbook, entitled *Life in the United Kingdom: A Guide for New Residents*.¹⁶ It is the bestselling publication listed on the TSO website when this report went to press. Applicants may purchase additional, official Home Office publications to assist preparation for the test. These publications include *Life in the United Kingdom: Official Practice Questions and Answers* which contains over 400 questions spread across 17 sample tests.¹⁷ There is also an *Official Study Guide* that combines edited information about each chapter in the official handbook with sample tests after each chapter.¹⁸

The *Life in the UK* test is part of successive governments' policies on immigration control. It was introduced by the Labour Government led by Prime Minister Tony Blair in 2005, but its roots extend back much earlier. In 2002, the then Home Secretary, David Blunkett MP, announced a consultation entitled 'The "Life in the United Kingdom" Advisory Group' on reforms to citizenship on 9 September 2002.¹⁹

The Group was led by Sir Bernard Crick, then Emeritus Professor of Politics at Birkbeck College, and they published *The New and the Old: The Report of the "Life in the United Kingdom" Advisory Group* in 2003.²⁰ The report states that 'The more we all know about each other, both new and settled inhabitants taking pride in our control, the less likely are serious problems to arise'.²¹ The report highlights the need to address the 'lack of English or limited awareness of cultural differences' as well as increasing 'participative citizenship and community development'.²²

The Advisory Group reaffirmed a central finding in the Denham Report published in 2001: 'It is ... essential to establish a greater sense of citizenship based on common principles that are shared by all sections of the community. This concept of citizenship would also place a higher value on cultural differences'.²³ The Advisory Group recommended a flexible programme of studies incorporating six broad categories: 'British national institutions in recent historical context', 'Britain as a multicultural society', 'knowing the law', 'employment', 'sources of help and information' and 'everyday needs'.²⁴ The Group further recommended that the Government publish a "Living in the United Kingdom" handbook free of charge that would include all relevant information.²⁵

These recommendations led to the launch of the *Life in the United Kingdom: A Journey to Citizenship* handbook published on behalf of the Advisory Group in 2004.²⁶ The handbook contained eight chapters covering the broad categories

bank or credit card statement, British driving licence or a letter from the Home Office with the applicant's name and address.

¹⁶ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition.

¹⁷ Michael Mitchell (2013) *Life in the United Kingdom: Official Practice Questions and Answers* (London: TSO).

¹⁸ Jenny Wales (2013), *Life in the United Kingdom: Official Study Guide* (London: TSO).

¹⁹ Home Office, 'Experts to Advise on Citizenship Reforms', 9 September 2002.

²⁰ Bernard Crick, et al (2003). *The New and the Old: The Report of the "Life in the United Kingdom" Advisory Group*. London: Home Office Social Policy Unit.

²¹ Ibid., para. 2.2.

²² Ibid., paras. 2.2-2.3.

²³ Ibid., para. 2.3. The Denham report is John Denham, et al (2001), *Building Cohesive Communities: A Report of the Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion* (London: Home Office).

²⁴ Ibid., paras. 3.2-3.8.

²⁵ Ibid., para. 4.2.

²⁶ Home Office (2004), *Life in the United Kingdom: A Journey to Citizenship* (London: TSO).

recommended by the Advisory Group. Its contents were informed through extensive consultation via the Citizenship Foundation, the Citizens Advice Bureau and Employability Forum.²⁷ Sir Bernard Crick led the drafting of the handbook and he was the sole author of the chapters 'The Making of the United Kingdom' covering key dates in British history and 'How Britain is Governed' providing an overview of UK politics.²⁸ Not all eight chapters were covered on the original test and the first chapter, 'The Making of the United Kingdom' covering British history, was omitted.²⁹

The Home Office published a second edition of the *Life of the UK* handbook in 2007. Passing either the test or ESOL became a requirement for all applications for Indefinite Leave to Remain and naturalisation. The second edition updates and revises material in the first edition without much substantive revision. The Home Office also published a new *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide* containing 200 practice questions for preparation for the test.³⁰ The *Study Guide* states that the practice questions 'are **not** the actual questions...in the test'.³¹ This is not my experience: the practice questions and prospective answers were virtually identical, if not the same, as those found in the test when sat in 2009.³²

A third edition of the handbook was published in 2013. It is substantially different from the first and second editions, including a new subtitle: *Life in the United Kingdom: A Guide for New Residents* (and instead of 'A Journey to Citizenship').³³ The third edition also saw publication of a revised practice questions guide to replace the *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide* of the second edition.³⁴ The third edition saw publication of a new, third book confusingly entitled the *Official Study Guide* although it is not linked to the *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide* of the second edition.³⁵

Costs

There are several costs for applicants including the price of sitting the test and acquiring test materials. The test has risen in recent years from £32.24 in 2009 to £50 today. This cost is per test: applicants that fail and have to be reassessed must pay £50 for each test sat.

The cost of test materials has risen since 2004 (see **Annex B**). The first and second editions of the handbook cost £9.99. The third edition is £12.99. The first edition had only the handbook for purchase. The second edition added an optional practice question guide that cost £5.99 and the third edition version is £7.99. The third edition has introduced a new study guide that costs £7.99. The handbook, practice question guide and new study guide are all official publications of the Home Office. The costs of the test and official test materials, including the *Life in the UK* handbook, have risen about 61% from £48.22 in 2009 to £78.97 in 2013. The costs of the test and

²⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 9 note 1.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 12.

³⁰ Home Office (2007), *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide* (London: TSO).

³¹ Ibid., p. v. Emphasis given.

³² See Thom Brooks, 'The British Citizenship Test: The Case for Reform', *The Political Quarterly* 83, pp. 560-61.

³³ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition.

³⁴ Mitchell, *Official Practice Questions and Answers*.

³⁵ Wales, *Official Study Guide*.

official materials for someone taking the test twice have risen about 62% from £80.46 to £128.97. The costs of a third test sitting have risen about 63% from £112.70 in 2009 to £178.97. The Home Office does not subsidize the costs of producing the *Life in the UK* handbook.³⁶ These costs do not include visa and citizenship application fees.³⁷

Report outline

Chapter One examines problems with earlier editions of the *Life in the UK* test and highlights the concerns found in the first and second editions that made a new, third edition necessary. *Chapter Two* notes the problems arising with the much delayed launch of the third edition test. *Chapter Three* discusses the improvements that the third edition has over previous editions. *Chapter Four* highlights new problems found in the third edition of the *Life in the UK* test. *Chapter Five* considers problems with the test design of the third edition. *Chapter Six* critically examines English language proficiency requirements in relation to the *Life in the UK* test. The *Conclusion* identifies recommendations for the production of a fourth edition.

³⁶ Damian Green MP, Minister of State (Immigration), HC Debate, 14 February 2011, c515W. Green further confirmed that the Home Office 'has not spent any money on citizenship training in the last three years' (ibid.).

³⁷ See the UK Border Agency website for information on fees, url: <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/>.

CHAPTER ONE

Problems with earlier editions

Several problems have been identified with the first two editions of the *Life in the UK* handbook. These problems created a need for a new third edition. This chapter discusses the problems found and how they were addressed.

The first edition

The first edition was criticised shortly after its publication for its errors. These errors include falsely attributing to former Prime Minister Winston Churchill the words 'Never in the course of human conflict have so many owed so much to so few'.³⁸ Instead, Churchill actually said 'Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few'.³⁹ Another mistake was the claim that Charles II was recalled from exile in France: he had been in Holland.⁴⁰ Not all mistakes were historical: Northern Ireland was identified as part of Great Britain when, in fact, it includes only England, Scotland and Wales.⁴¹

These errors are all found in the first chapter on British history ('The making of the United Kingdom') which was single-authored by Sir Bernard Crick.⁴² His response to criticisms about these errors was that it was part of a rushed effort that had to be rushed. Crick told *The Guardian*: 'There are errors in it because it was done fairly quickly because we didn't want to keep immigrants waiting for their citizenship'.⁴³ The first edition noted further that updates and corrections would be confirmed on a new website.⁴⁴ The handbook appears to confirm the swiftness through which it was constructed. Crick states 'We have tried hard to check all facts cited, and we apologise if there are mistakes or important omissions'.⁴⁵ Perhaps the biggest problem with the first edition was not its errors, but its poor presentation. The handbook is not well written and there are several typographical errors which may be unsurprising given the relatively short timeframe for its drafting and publication.⁴⁶

Many of the errors in the handbook proved somewhat inconsequential because the chapter containing them was included for informational purposes only and it was not a part of the test. Nonetheless, the test received widespread criticism for the information that was included in the test. This led to the handbook's description as 'the funniest book currently available in the English language' in the *London Review of Books*.⁴⁷ Particular attention was paid to a section on 'pubs' in a wide-ranging chapter on 'Everyday Needs' where the handbook states: 'If you spill a stranger's

³⁸ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, p. 37.

³⁹ This quotation is included in Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 57.

⁴⁰ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, p. 28.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴³ Lee Glendinning, 'Citizenship guide fails its history exam', *The Guardian*, url: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2006/apr/29/immigration.immigrationpolicy>.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9 note 1. The url given is

http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind/en/home/0/reports/life_in_the_uk.html.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9 note 1.

⁴⁶ For one example, compare '(see pp.23-29)' and '(see pp. 67-68)' where one has a space and another does not at Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, p. 51.

⁴⁷ Andrew O'Hagan (2006), 'Short Cuts', *London Review of Books* 28(23) (30 November): 22, url: <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v28/n22/andrew-ohagan/short-cuts>.

drink by accident, it is good manners (and prudent) to offer to buy another'.⁴⁸ Such statements are unrepresentative of the handbook's contents although the pub extract attracted widespread criticism.⁴⁹

The handbook included other information that was either incorrect or outdated. For example, the first edition falsely claimed there are 645 constituencies in the UK.⁵⁰ In fact, there were 646 Parliamentary constituencies and this is correctly noted in the second edition.⁵¹ This error has not been discovered previously. The error may be due to the fact that only 645 seats were contested in the 2005 General Election because the election in a 646th constituency, Staffordshire South, was postponed because one of the candidates had died.⁵²

The second edition

The second edition published in 2007 has been described as 'even more about life in the United Kingdom than its predecessor had been' including additional information about government programmes and practicalities including a new glossary.⁵³ The second edition is a more polished and readable version of the original handbook. It corrects historical inaccuracies and other errors found in the first edition and updates as well as revises the content.

The second edition retains the title and subtitle for the handbook – *Life in the United Kingdom: A Journey to Citizenship*. Several chapter titles are amended from 'Britain' to the 'UK' as in chapter 3 (from 'Britain today: a profile' amended to 'UK Today: A Profile') and chapter 4 (from 'How Britain is governed' to 'How the United Kingdom is Governed').

Most chapter subtitles remain unchanged. The exceptions are chapter 3 where the second edition amends 'religion and toleration' to 'religion' and 'the regions of Britain' is revised to read 'the nations and regions of the UK'. Chapter 4 on British politics combines several chapter subtitles to two: 'The British Constitution' and 'The UK in Europe and the World'.⁵⁴ Chapter 4 ('Everyday Needs') removes the subtitle of 'Identity documents'. Chapter 6 ('Employment') revises 'Children at work' to 'Childcare and children at work'. Several changes are made to the chapter 'Knowing the Law' which is included in both handbooks, but not part of the first or second edition tests.⁵⁵ The second edition offers an expanded section 'Sources of Help and Information'.⁵⁶ There is a new chapter on 'Building Better Communities' that is not

⁴⁸ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, p. 101.

⁴⁹ See James Slack, 'The migrant test', *Daily Mail* (16 June 2005), url: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-352444/The-migrant-test.html>.

⁵⁰ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, p. 61.

⁵¹ 2d ed p. 44.

⁵² BBC News, 'Voters decide on next government', url:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/vote_2005/frontpage/4514981.stm.

⁵³ Kerry Ryan (5 March 2013), 'Citizenship by the booklet', *Inside Story*, url: <http://inside.org.au/citizenship-by-the-booklet/>.

⁵⁴ Chapter subtitles combined are 'The working system', 'The British constitution', 'The formal institutions', 'Devolved administration', 'Britain in Europe and the world', 'The ordinary citizen'.

⁵⁵ The first edition has chapter subtitles 'The rights and duties of a citizen', 'Human rights', 'Marriage and divorce', 'Children', 'Consumer protection', 'Criminal Courts', 'Civil Courts' and 'Legal advice and aid'. The second edition revises and reorders these subtitles to 'The rights and duties of a citizen', 'Criminal courts', 'Civil courts', 'Legal advice and aid', 'Human rights', 'children' and 'consumer protection'.

⁵⁶ This section has been switched with 'Knowing the Law' in the table of contents to follow that chapter.

part of the test which includes information about good citizenship and volunteering in local communities. There is also a new 'Glossary' to conclude the second edition of the handbook with over 400 terms.

There are few changes of substance in the second edition of the handbook. Much of the text corrects, revises or expands upon the first edition. The first edition begins its first chapter on the subject of British history with the words: 'To understand a country well and the character of its inhabitants, some history is needed'.⁵⁷ The second edition revises this sentence to read more easily: 'To understand a country it is important to know something about its history'.⁵⁸ Other lines are revised, such as 'At the end of the Second World War' is revised to read 'After the Second World War (1939-45)'.⁵⁹

A further change is the reduction of telephone numbers listed. The first edition includes 31 telephone numbers and 49 websites, such as the telephone number for the National Academic Recognition Information Centre for the UK (01242 260010, fax 01242 258611) and the website for the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (www.pdsa.org.uk).⁶⁰ The telephone numbers and websites could generate 80 unique test questions for more than three unique tests.

The second edition includes 36 telephone numbers and 23 websites, such as how to contact Members of Parliament or regional assemblies in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland as well as emergency services. There are others like Association of British Credit Unions website (www.abcul.coop) and telephone number for Energywatch (0845 906 0708).⁶¹ The telephone number for NARIC remains included.⁶² The second edition's contains enough numbers and websites for 59 unique questions for more than two unique tests. There are no questions about either telephone numbers or websites in the 200 study questions published in a companion *Official Citizenship Study Guide*.

Need for a third edition

There are three problems with the second edition handbook that made necessary a new, third edition. The first problem is the handbook required revision and updating shortly after its publication.⁶³ The handbook was published in March 2007 and not revised in a third edition until March 2013. During this time, the 'correct' answer for many questions was factually untrue because of various changes over this period. For example, the *Official Citizenship Study Guide* includes a question about the approximate population of the UK. The options presented are '56 million', '58 million', '60 million' and '62 million'. The correct answer for the test is 60 million. This is

⁵⁷ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, p. 17.

⁵⁸ Home Office (2007), *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition (London: TSO), p. 7.

⁵⁹ See Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, p. 43 and Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, p. 27.

⁶⁰ See Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, pp. 109, 102.

⁶¹ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, pp. 61, 58.

⁶² Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, p. 76.

⁶³ The second edition also includes typographical errors, such as 'up to £3,000per year' and not '£3,000 per year'. Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, p. 68.

misleading because the question pertains to the 2001 census and the population is now over 62 million.⁶⁴

Particularly striking are the number of questions about British politics that became outdated. The *Official Citizenship Study Guide* asks about the number of Parliamentary constituencies with options of 464, 564, 646 and 664.⁶⁵ The 'correct' answer for the test is 646, but the factually correct answer is 650. The *Guide* includes a question about the number of seats held by the UK in the European Parliament listing options of 58, 68, 78 and 88.⁶⁶ The 'correct' answer is 78, but the factually correct answer is 73. Applicants must answer questions inaccurately to pass the test while correct answers are often not an option.

There are questions about programmes and departments that have since been merged or closed. For example, one test question asks: 'Young people from families with low income can get financial help with their studies when they leave school at 16'.⁶⁷ Applicants must reply with the answer 'Education Maintenance Allowance' to get this answer correct, but this programme had been scrapped a couple years ago. Test takers are asked to confirm information about programmes that have been discontinued.

Another question asks about 'Which TWO places can you go if you need a National Insurance number?' with the correct answers of 'Jobcentre Plus' and 'Social Security Office' and incorrect answers of 'Department of Education and Skills' and 'Home Office'.⁶⁸ There are several problems with this question. First, one of the correct answers ('Social Security Office') and one of the incorrect answers ('Department of Education and Skills') had either closed or merged. Secondly, this question was a part of the sample test that all applicants sat prior to beginning the official test. This sample test has four questions and its answers are revealed so applicants can have a sense of how prepared they are for the actual test.⁶⁹ Applicants may leave the test centre without a refund after the sample test, if they wish. It was a concern that applicants might become deterred from sitting the test on the basis of factually untrue answers presented as 'correct' on the official sample test. So the test required fairly substantially revision of typographical errors and outdated information about demographical data, British politics and government programmes.

A further problem with the second edition test is that it continued the practice started in its first edition of including chapters in the handbook that are not covered in the test. These chapters cover the topics of basic law and British history and culture. These absences are notable.⁷⁰ The citizenship tests used by other countries have typically included questions about its history. Australia has a booklet for test preparation with three parts that are tested covering the meaning and responsibilities

⁶⁴ Home Office (2007), *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide* (London: TSO), p. 38.

⁶⁵ Home Office, *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide*, p. 54.

⁶⁶ Home Office, *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide*, p. 56.

⁶⁷ Home Office, *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide*, p. 72.

⁶⁸ Home Office, *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide*, p. 14.

⁶⁹ These questions are found in Home Office, *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide*, pp. 13-14.

⁷⁰ I argue for their inclusion in a BBC Radio 4 interview on the 'You and Yours' programme (10 October 2011), url: http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b015mzl2/You_and_yours_Chris_Tarrant_on_dramatic_pauses/. The Prime Minister confirmed inclusion of British history and culture in the test in an announcement a few hours later. David Cameron, 'Prime Minister's speech on immigration', 10 October 2011, url: <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/prime-ministers-speech-on-immigration/>.

of Australian citizenship, Australian history, and culture and Australian politics and governance.⁷¹ The United States has a booklet with 100 questions and answers. Nearly all are about either American politics and governance or US history.⁷²

A third problem is more fundamental and concerns the need to rethink our expectations about immigrant knowledge.⁷³ Most citizens will never need to pass a citizenship test. The test is an obstacle for persons who are currently non-citizens, but it should consider whether its purpose is to create a new barrier or build a new bridge with prospective future citizens. The test's importance is not merely that its failure may leave some unable to become members, but that passing the test may open the door to membership to others. What should serve as our expectations about immigrant knowledge? How might this be effectively delivered by a citizenship test? How might the current test be improved to perform its role for immigration policy better?

These questions focus narrowly on the place and purpose of the citizenship test for British public policy. There is no clear evidence that any government has grappled with them in any substantive way after the first edition handbook was published. Perhaps surprisingly, there has been no concerted effort to engage with new citizens who has passed the citizenship test and met the requirements for becoming a British citizen. This could have helped inform improvements in handbook design, the range and kinds of knowledge tested and provide constructive feedback about the test's utility from the standpoint of its users.

⁷¹ See Australian Government, Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 'Citizenship Test', url: http://www.citizenship.gov.au/learn/cit_test/.

⁷² See U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, *Learn about the United States: Quick Civics Lessons for the Naturalization Test*, M-638 (rev. 01/13), url: <http://www.uscis.gov/citizenship>.

⁷³ See Brooks, 'The British Citizenship Test', pp. 563-64.

CHAPTER TWO

Problems with the launch of the new *Life in the UK* test

A new, third edition of the *Life in the UK* test was launched in 2013 after several delays. The first, official announcement that a third edition of the test would be published was made by Prime Minister David Cameron on 10 October 2011 as part of a major speech outlining new immigration reforms.⁷⁴ This came after a BBC Radio 4 broadcast an interview noting serious problems with the test the same day.⁷⁵ The interview with Dr Thom Brooks noted concerns that the test contained serious flaws, such as factual inaccuracies, and argued that some element of British history and culture should be incorporated into the test.⁷⁶

In the Prime Minister's speech, he affirmed that one of the proposed changes to the test would be to incorporate questions about British history and culture.⁷⁷ The Prime Minister claimed a new *Life in the UK* test would be published the following autumn in 2012.⁷⁸ This was confirmed in November 2011 by the then Minister of State for Immigration, Damian Green MP, who said:

‘The Prime Minister announced on 10 October [2011] that we would change the test and put British history and culture at the heart of it. We plan to have a revised test in place by autumn 2012’.⁷⁹

The Government continued to confirm it would publish a new test in late 2012 about a year later. In September 2012, in response to Chi Onwurah MP⁸⁰, Damian Green confirmed:

‘A new edition of the handbook ‘Life in the United Kingdom: A Journey to Citizenship’ is currently being finalized with the aim of publishing it later this year. We are aware that the existing handbook has some out-of-date information, which will be remedied by the publication of a new edition. In the meantime, questions for the life in the UK test which are no longer valid are in any case removed from the question bank so candidates should not suffer any adverse effects’.⁸¹

⁷⁴ David Cameron, ‘Prime Minister’s speech on immigration’, 10 October 2011, url: <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/prime-ministers-speech-on-immigration/>.

⁷⁵ Thom Brooks, BBC Radio 4 interview on the ‘You and Yours’ programme (10 October 2011), url: http://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b015mzl2/You_and_Yours_Chris_Tarrant_on_dramatic_pauses/. I also argued that some element of the chapter on ‘Knowing the Law’ should be incorporated.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Cameron, ‘Prime Minister’s speech on immigration’, 10 October 2011, url: <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/prime-ministers-speech-on-immigration/>.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Damian Green MP, Minister of State (Immigration), HC Debate, 22 November 2011, c248W. This is also confirmed by a personal correspondence from Ann Robertson, Policy Leader on Migration Policy in the Home Office, letter dated 14 November 2011 and by Lord Henley in response to a question from Revd Lord Roberts of Llandudno in a House of Lords debate about British citizenship held on 31 July 2012.

⁸⁰ The questions posed to Damian Green MP about (1) when the Home Office plans to update the *Life in the UK* handbook and (2) what estimate had been made about ‘of the number if inaccuracies’ in the *Life in the UK* handbook and their effect on applicants by Chi Onwurah MP arose from criticisms raised in Brooks, ‘The British Citizenship Test’. See Chi Onwurah MP, HC Debate, 5 September 2012, c350W.

⁸¹ Damian Green MP, Minister of State (Immigration), HC Debate, 5 September 2012, c350W.

The new handbook was not published until 28 January 2013 and some months after the original launch planned for autumn 2012.

There was a delay between the publication of the new *Life in the UK* handbook in January and the launch of the new test delayed until 25 March 2013. Persons sitting the *Life in the UK* test had two months to prepare in advance. All questions on the test come from the handbook and the test was designed so that knowledge about the handbook would ensure successful completion of the test.

One problem concerning this delay that escaped attention concerns an important omission in the new handbook. The second edition of the handbook states on its cover that it is 'The official publication valid for tests taken from April 2007'. This is clarified in the handbook's preface where it confirms that the handbook is the official resource for preparing for the *Life in the UK* test for tests taken from 2nd April 2007.⁸²

However, the third edition of the handbook omits any mention of the date from which it is the official handbook for the *Life in the UK* test. The third edition states on its cover that it is 'The ONLY OFFICIAL handbook for the Life in the UK test' under the year '2013'.⁸³ The handbook claims it 'will help prepare you for taking the Life in the UK test' and that test questions 'are based on ALL parts of the handbook' and, specifically, the third edition of the handbook.⁸⁴ It informs applicants that requirements concerning English language proficiency will change from October 2013 (see Chapter Six) and that, more generally, 'requirements for citizenship applications may also change *in the future*'.⁸⁵

The problem is that the third edition handbook is the official handbook, but *only* for tests taken from 25th March 2013. The second edition of the handbook was available concurrently and it remained the source from which *Life in the UK* test questions were based until 25th March. Neither the handbook, its *Official Study Guide* or *Official Practice Questions and Answers* includes this important fact. An applicant planning to sit the test between January and mid-March 2013 would find two different editions of the handbook that each claim to be the only 'official' resource for the *Life in the UK* test. It would be possible for someone to purchase the third edition handbook by mistake to sit a *Life in the UK* test based on the second edition handbook. This problem has not been identified previously.

There is another problem with the launch of the new test. The second edition saw the introduction of a new supplementary book with practice questions and answers to help applicants prepare. The *Life in the UK* test is a multiple choice test somewhat unique in format. Citizenship tests used in other countries, such as Australia and the United States, provide applicants with four choices where one correct answer must be supplied. The *Life in the UK* test brings together a combination of different formats: some questions require applicants to choose successfully the one correct answer from four options, but other questions require the selection of two correct answers from four options and other questions ask applicants whether a statement is true or false.

⁸² Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, preface.

⁸³ Emphasis given.

⁸⁴ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 10.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

While knowledge about the facts given in the second edition handbook is sufficient to pass the test, the handbook is silent about the different kinds of questions asked. Complete information about the test's format is only provided by the supplementary study guide with practice questions. Someone lacking knowledge about the somewhat unique format of the test may be surprised by this format because of its novelty and because nothing is said about it in the official handbook. It is problematic that the official handbook of the test lacks information about the test itself and that this is left to an 'optional' supplementary book.

The third edition of the *Life in the UK* test is a substantial departure from the first two editions in many respects. The third edition says of this test that it 'consists of 24 questions about important aspects of life in the UK'.⁸⁶ It does not say how many questions must be answered correctly or the format the questions would take. Nor is it obvious that the test would continue to require at least 18 correct answers or its earlier format especially in light of the several other major changes.

Applicants taking the third edition test would have had no clear confirmation about the number of questions to be answered correctly or the test format. This information is published in only one book – the supplemental *Official Practice Questions and Answers*. Neither the official handbook nor the newly launched *Official Study Guide* confirms how many questions must be answered correctly out of 24 provided on the test. Both supplemental texts – the *Official Practice Questions and Answers* and *Official Study Guide* – provide information about the test format, but not the one required text for applicants taking the test, the official *Life in the UK* handbook. The supplemental texts confirm that applicants must continue to answer 18 or more questions correctly to pass the test and the test format is unchanged from the second edition.

The third edition handbook says nothing about the distribution of questions by chapter beyond this statement: 'Questions are based on ALL parts of the handbook'.⁸⁷ It is difficult to confirm the distribution of questions across chapters for the new test in the absence of any specific guidance and the non-publication of actual tests in use for persons not administering or sitting the test. Some insight may be provided through a close examination of the 17 practice tests published in the *Official Practice Questions and Answers*.⁸⁸ Each practice test has 24 questions like the actual test and 408 questions are provided in total. The practice tests follow a clear pattern of no more than 1 question from the chapters 'The values and principles of the UK' and 'What is the UK?', normally 8 questions from the chapter 'A long and illustrious history', about 7 questions from the chapter 'A modern, thriving society' and 7 or 8 questions from the last chapter, 'The UK government, the law and your role' (see **Annex C**). If an accurate predictor, then applicants should expect about one-third of questions to be on British history and most questions to come from the last three chapters. Since applicants must correctly answer 18 or more from 24 questions, then it is possible to pass the test – if the above distribution is correct – without studying the first two chapters about British values and political geography.

⁸⁶ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 10.

⁸⁷ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 10. The chapters in the second edition are of approximately similar lengths.

⁸⁸ Mitchell, *Official Practice Questions and Answers*.

The new test was launched on 25 March 2013. The supplementary materials providing the only information about the number of questions to be answered correctly in order to pass and the test format were not released until 28 March 2013 and so *after* the test's launch. In response to a written question by Revd Lord Roberts of Llandudno about this delay,⁸⁹ Lord Taylor of Holbeach said that 'all the information necessary to pass the test' is contained in the *Life in the UK: A Guide for New Residents* handbook.⁹⁰ While the handbook does provide the facts to be tested, the handbook does not, in fact, contain information about test requirements and format. This statement by Lord Taylor is also the first time the Government noted the new subtitle for the handbook, changing it from *A Journey to Citizenship* to *A Guide for New Residents*.

Lord Taylor adds:

'The Stationary Office (TSO) produces a study guide and a practice question and answer book, which supplement the handbook. These are not Home Office publications, although the Home Office is aware of their content and has confirmed their accuracy. TSO needed to check the content of these companion products against the official handbook after its publication to ensure they were of greatest use to the reader, and used its best endeavours to publish as soon as possible'.⁹¹

The claim is that the delayed publication of the supplementary materials was caused by the need to check them for accuracy. Or, in other words, the delayed confirmation of the contents for the new official handbook further delayed work in producing its supplementary texts.

It is surprising that the Government did not publish the three texts together. The handbook provides incomplete information about the test that is supplemented in the other texts that were published after the test was launched. One reason for proceeding anyway might be the need to launch a new test given the many problems with the second edition. It is nevertheless unclear why the Government did not wait until all official texts were prepared given it would have meant a delay of no more than an additional two months. Nor are the two publications produced after the launch of the new test well synchronised. Each lists sample practice questions and provides answers, but using somewhat different formats: the *Official Study Guide* refers its readers to the relevant *page number* in the official handbook, but the *Official Practice Questions and Answers* refers readers to the relevant *page number* and *chapter* in the official handbook. All practice questions and answers were written by the same author, Michael Mitchell, so this difference is particularly surprising.

Delays in the publication of the handbook and test were not because of the Government was waiting for any consultation to be completed. One important statement on this matter is by Lord Taylor of Holbeach in a House of Lords debate where he states that: 'We have not as yet received any direct representations, although public comment on the new handbook has been broadly positive'.⁹² This brief statement appears to suggest that the handbook was not subject to any official

⁸⁹ This question came after noting this problem to his office.

⁹⁰ Lord Taylor of Holbeach, HL Debate, 22 April 2013, c354W.

⁹¹ Lord Taylor of Holbeach, HL Debate, 22 April 2013, c354W.

⁹² Lord Taylor of Holbeach, HL Debate, 26 February 2013, c954.

consultation prior to its publication. It is perhaps likely that the new third edition handbook was designed by ministers and a relatively small team in isolation from engagement with new citizens who successfully passed the test previously, academics and other persons who could have fed into this process externally.

One further issue concerning the launch of the new test is authorship of the supplemental texts. All three editions of the *Life in the UK* handbook are copyrighted by the Crown. The second edition's *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide* is copyrighted by The Stationary Office without any named author. The third edition's supplemental texts are also copyrighted by The Stationary Office with the brief statement in small font on their front cover 'Supporting the official Home Office/TSO publication *Life in the United Kingdom: A Guide for New Residents* (3rd edition)'. Both name a single author: Michael Mitchell is the author of the *Official Practice Questions and Answers* and Jenny Wales is author of the *Official Study Guide*. Wales is author of several other books about British citizenship for Edexcel.⁹³ There is no official announcement from the Home Office concerning the appointment of authors for these texts nor mention in Hansard.

⁹³ See Jenny Wales (2009), *Citizenship Today – Student's Book: Endorsed by Edexcel, 3rd ed* (London: Collins) and Jenny Wales (2010), *Collins Revision – GCSE Citizenship for Edexcel* (London, Collins).

CHAPTER THREE

Improvements over earlier editions

The third edition provides several improvements over earlier editions, specifically the second edition.

Improved look

The first edition contains no images. The second edition is mostly black and white with a few colour images. The third edition is the first to be published in full colour. The covers have gone from blue with white lettering (first edition) and purple with white lettering (second edition) to vibrant multi-coloured texts in red (*Official Study Guide*), white (*Life in the UK* handbook) and blue (*Official Practice Questions and Answers*). Full colour images are reproduced in the handbook and *Official Study Guide* of both famous British citizens and photos of important landmarks.

The third edition reads less like a policy report than earlier editions although there remain uneven editing in the distribution of chapters and the presentation of information. Chapters vary widely in their number of pages and the final chapter ('The UK government, the law and your role') covers much more than this, including information about driving, organ donation and recycling formerly presented across multiple chapters. The new edition includes text boxes with important information to be remembered kept over from the second edition alongside several text boxes noting significant individuals and moments in British history.

Fewer telephone numbers and websites

Past editions make regular references to telephone numbers and websites. This has been reduced significantly in the third edition where most such information is provided for websites-only. The first edition includes 31 telephone numbers and 49 websites that might be tested and the second edition lists 36 telephone numbers and 23 websites, but the third edition notes only 5 telephone numbers and 34 websites that might be tested. The 5 telephone numbers are the House of Commons (020 7729 3000), Holyrood (0131 348 5200), the Welsh Assembly (0845 010 5500), the National Domestic Violence helpline (0808 2000 247) and the HMRC self-assessment helpline (0845 300 0627). No telephone number is given to contact the Northern Ireland Assembly at Stormont in Belfast.

The inclusion of telephone numbers and websites is controversial. The second edition's *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide* does not include any practice questions about telephone numbers or websites. The third edition's *Official Study Guide* and *Official Practice Questions and Answers* lack any practice questions about them as well. No one has confirmed having sat a question on the *Life in the UK* test asking for a telephone number or website. It would be difficult to justify the inclusion of 50 or more telephone numbers and websites. Nonetheless, there is a problem if the Government approved handbook claims that such information might be tested; but, in fact, it has not and will not be tested. It would suggest that the handbook includes more information in chapters covered by the test than included in any test. This gap between the information included in the handbook versus the information examined in the *Life in the UK* test is a serious problem for the new test and discussed in Chapter Four.

Factual errors corrected

All factual errors in the second edition have been corrected in the third edition. It is noticeable that these errors have been corrected in several instances through their omission. For example, previous versions of the test included questions about various Government programmes and departments. Problems arose where these were amended, merged or ceased. The third edition overcomes this problem by cutting out most, if not all, references to Government programmes and departments.

Another example concerns the number of MPs and MEPs. The second edition was correct at the time of publication, but outdated soon afterwards. The third edition overcomes this problem by noting neither the number of MPs or MEPs. (However, the handbook *does* include the number of representatives sitting in Welsh Assembly, Scottish Parliament and Northern Ireland Assembly.⁹⁴) So the problem of factual errors in past tests about the British Government and its programmes has been addressed by removing information about them from the test.

Sample online test

There is a free, sample, online test that appears to offer a useful sample of what the test might be like. It gives applicants 45 minutes to answer 24 questions where 18 or more must be answered correctly to pass it. The test is unofficial and for practice only. All questions offered are found in the *Official Practice Questions and Answers* text. Multiple choice questions used list possible answers in the same order as found in this text. After the test is completed, applicants are told whether they have passed and the correct answers to any wrongly answered questions is provided.

This test is a welcome preparation for new applicants that provides some insight into what they might expect when taking the test. Previously, it was possible to find sample online tests, but at non-official websites where some used questions from the official study guide and others did not with few, if any, providing a realistic guide to what might be expected on the actual test.

Broader coverage

Criticisms of the second edition focussed on the proliferation of factually untrue 'correct' answers and the restricted subject-matter of the test.⁹⁵ All three editions have contained a chapter on British history and culture along with a chapter on basic elements of British law. These chapters include information about the *Magna Carta*, the Reformation, the English Civil War and how to contact the police to report a crime. The third edition is the first to make this information a part of the test. This is to be broadly welcomed. Citizenship tests have typically included some element of historical knowledge and the *Life in the UK* test is now more closely aligned with similar tests elsewhere, such as used in Australia and the United States.

It must be noted that this broader coverage is often a result of expanding upon existing content. Consider the discussion of the Romans. The second edition states:

⁹⁴ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 136.

⁹⁵ See Brooks, 'The British Citizenship Test'.

'In 55 BC the Romans, who had an empire covering most of the Mediterranean lands, first came to Britain with Julius Caesar. Nearly a hundred years later they came back and began a conquest of all of Britain except the highlands of Scotland. There was strong opposition from the native tribes who fought to try to keep the Romans out. A famous tribal leader who fought the Romans was Boudicca, the queen of the Iceni in what is now eastern England'.⁹⁶

The third edition reads:

'Julius Caesar led a Roman invasion of Britain in 55 BC. This was unsuccessful and for nearly 100 years Britain remained separate from the Roman Empire. In AD 43 the Emperor Claudius led the Roman army in a new invasion. This time, there was resistance from some of the British tribes but the Romans were successful in occupying almost all of Britain. One of the tribal leaders who fought against the Romans was Boudicca, the queen of the Iceni in what is now eastern England. She is still remembered today and there is a statue of her on Westminster Bridge in London, near the Houses of Parliament'.⁹⁷

This example makes clear that the newly designed chapter 'A long and illustrious history' introduces new historical facts into the handbook, but mostly to expand already existing information about British history found in the first and second editions. This is also true of British culture, as the second edition includes information covered in the test about sport and important dates like Remembrance Day. The third edition does not so much introduce British culture into the test, but rather greatly expands the amount of information in this area.

⁹⁶ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, p. 8. Compare with the first edition: 'The Romans, who had conquered and given law and order to the whole Mediterranean world, began to expand into Britain some decades after Julius Caesar had made an exploratory foray into Britain in 55 BC. Not until the following century did they return to conquer and establish control of the entire island except Wales and the north. There was strong opposition from the native inhabitants; one great revolt is still remembered in the name of Boudicca, the Queen of the Iceni tribe in eastern England'. Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, p. 18.

⁹⁷ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 17.

CHAPTER FOUR

New problems with current test

The third edition of the *Life in the United Kingdom* handbook corrects and revises several problems found in the second edition. However, the third edition introduces several new problems as well.

Impractical

The *Life in the UK* test has been designed to test not 'Britishness', but the ability to live in and contribute to British life. The first edition handbook notes that it is 'essentially a compendium of useful information helpful to those new arrivals settling in to this country'.⁹⁸ Similarly, the second edition states that the handbook can be used to prepare for the test 'or simply to increase your knowledge of British life and institutions'.⁹⁹ The third edition says that its 'hope' is that readers will find the book 'useful and interesting'.¹⁰⁰ It states that it will help applicants 'integrate into society and play a full role in your local community'.¹⁰¹

One problem with the new test is that it has become impractical and its reform has rendered it much less helpful as a 'compendium of useful information'.¹⁰² The Home Secretary, Theresa May MP, told Parliament that the *Life in the UK* test would no longer require candidates to know 'about water meters and how to claim benefits' and instead enable 'people to participate fully in our society'.¹⁰³ This statement was echoed by Mark Harper MP, Minister for Immigration: 'We've stripped out mundane information about water meters, how to find train timetables, and using the internet, the new test rightly focuses on values and principles at the heart of being British. Instead of telling people how to claim benefits it encourages participation in British life'.¹⁰⁴

The Government was critical about what it perceived as an overemphasis on the practical minutiae of daily life in the *Life in the UK* test. One area of concern is the number of telephone numbers and websites listed in previous editions: they have been substantially reduced in the third edition and this move is welcome (see Chapter Three). The second edition of the handbook includes information about how to claim Jobseeker's Allowance and receive help with childcare.¹⁰⁵ The *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide* notes practice questions covering job references, how to find details of trade unions and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance.¹⁰⁶

A major problem for the new handbook is that it has become impractical and largely as a result of the removal of far too much information available in previous handbooks. Applicants need no longer know how to register with a GP, contact an

⁹⁸ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, p. 10.

⁹⁹ John Reid MP, 'Foreword' in Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition.

¹⁰⁰ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 162.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁰² Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, p. 10.

¹⁰³ House of Commons debate, 25 March 2013, c1277.

¹⁰⁴ Mark Harper MP, 'New Life in the UK test goes live', Home Office Announcement (25 March 2013), url: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-life-in-the-uk-test-goes-live--2>.

¹⁰⁵ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, pp. 81, 84.

¹⁰⁶ Home Office, *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide*, pp. 81, 85, 87.

ambulance or report a crime.¹⁰⁷ Applicants need not know the kinds of educational qualifications available and the subjects taught in schools. Such information has been removed in favour of new requirements that applicants know the approximate age of Big Ben ('over 150 years old')¹⁰⁸ and height of the London Eye in both feet and metres ('443 feet' and '135 metres').¹⁰⁹ If the Government remains committed to a handbook designed to help applicants 'integrate into society and play a full role' as well as ensure applicants possess 'a broad general knowledge', then this commitment appears undermined by the omission of information about education and schools, health care and the NHS, and policing and neighbourhood safety from the handbook – each a fundamental part of what might be necessary for immigrants to integrate and play a full role.

The Government has justified its removal of information found in previous tests saying it 'removed questions on topics that those living in the UK should already be aware of like public transport, credit cards and job interviews'.¹¹⁰ This was restated by Lord Taylor when asked about widely reported analysis by Dr Thom Brooks that the *Life in the UK* test was 'unfit for purpose'.¹¹¹ Lord Taylor states:

'The Government do not share Dr Brooks' view that the handbook goes too far by including information about British culture and history at the expense of practical knowledge ... The majority of those applying will have been in the UK for at least five years and should therefore be aware of practical matters, such as how to contact the emergency services'.¹¹²

There is an apparent distinction made between (a) the information new migrants is expected to know and should be tested and (b) the information new migrants is expected to be aware of and should not be tested. The Government's argument is that information about how to contact an ambulance or report a crime and information about educational qualifications are information we should expect migrants to know and so need not test them: new migrants should 'be aware' of such matters.¹¹³

This justification is without merit and it is unclear how any such distinction can be made across cases. Indeed, new migrants might be expected to be aware of many facts covered in the *Life in the UK*. There is no evidence provided to support the distinction and its application in the third edition.

¹⁰⁷ The only mention of the NHS is found in the chapter 'A long and illustrious history' in the section 'Britain since 1945' covering post-war British history. The NHS nor the terms 'GP', 'health' and 'health care' is not included in the index. See Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 60, 172-80.

¹⁰⁸ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 108.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 113.

¹¹⁰ Home Office, 'New Life in the UK test goes live', 25 March 2013, url: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-life-in-the-uk-test-goes-live--2>.

¹¹¹ See Revd Lord Roberts of Llandudno, HL Debate, 21 May 2013, c43W. See also Press Association, 'UK Citizenship Test for Foreign Nationals is "Unfit for Purpose" says Academic', *The Huffington Post*, 17 March 2013, url: http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/03/17/british-citizenship-test-unfit_n_2896938.html?utm_hp_ref=uk?ncid=GEP; Tom Wilkinson, 'Citizenship test is "unfit for purpose"', *The Scotsman*, 18 March 2013, url: <http://www.scotsman.com/news/uk/expert-citizens-test-is-unfit-for-purpose-1-2842326> and *The Times*, 18 March 2013, p. 9.

¹¹² Lord Taylor of Holbeach, HL Debate, 21 May 2013, c44W.

¹¹³ Ibid.

There is abundant evidence the Government continues to test applicants about information we should expect new migrants to know after living in the UK for five or more years. For example, the third edition handbook requires applicants to know that London and Edinburgh are British cities¹¹⁴ and London is the biggest in the UK,¹¹⁵ British currency includes the £1 coin and £5 note,¹¹⁶ Christmas Day is the 25th December,¹¹⁷ Boxing Day is a Bank Holiday the day after Christmas,¹¹⁸ Andy Murray is a tennis player,¹¹⁹ the Queen is the head of the state¹²⁰ and David Cameron is the current Prime Minister,¹²¹ people should 'try to keep your garden tidy',¹²² people should 'only put your refuse bags and bins on the street or in communal areas if they are due to be collected',¹²³ and that the United States is an independent country.¹²⁴ Is it less certain people living in the UK for five or more years will know about £1 coins and Christmas Day (so these facts should be included in the test) than about what is a 'GCSE' and how to report a crime (so these facts should be excluded from the test)? Are facts about coinage and Christmas less 'mundane' than facts about how to register with a GP or phone an ambulance? There is no clear rationale provided by the Government to justify this distinction and its use.

The test is impractical in other ways, such as its being incomplete. The section 'How you can support your community' includes a subsection on 'Helping in schools'.¹²⁵ This is the only place where information about schools can be found. The handbook states that applicants can 'support your community and be a good citizen' in several ways, such as through helping in schools.¹²⁶ The first eight sentences of this section note that 'parents can often help in classrooms' and one way is through helping schools raise money through 'book sales, toy sales or bringing food to sell'.¹²⁷ The final nine sentences focus exclusively on school boards where applicants are encouraged to become school governors and how applicants in England might apply online.¹²⁸ The handbook adds: 'In England, parents and other community groups can apply to open a free school in their local area' and a website is provided to find more information about launching a free school.¹²⁹

These 17 sentences about education and schools replace the 115 sentences across four pages in the handbook's second edition.¹³⁰ The new, third edition has removed the following information previously available in the second edition: education in the UK is free and compulsory;¹³¹ a parent or guardian may be prosecuted if his or her

¹¹⁴ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 72.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 154.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 155-56.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ See Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, pp. 66-69.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

child fails to attend school;¹³² there are primary and secondary schools;¹³³ how places are allocated at schools;¹³⁴ there are costs relating to school uniforms and gym clothes, as well as school outings;¹³⁵ children from low income families can receive help with costs including the cost of school meals;¹³⁶ there are faith schools and independent schools;¹³⁷ there is a National Curriculum and the subjects included;¹³⁸ students in Wales learn Welsh;¹³⁹ and information about A-levels and university study.¹⁴⁰ This information is practical and useful. The Government provides no rationale for its removal. The reduction of information about education in the handbook by 85% is surprising given its importance in the daily lives of many residents.¹⁴¹ There is nothing said in the current handbook about compulsory background checks for adults working with children.

Information removed about the NHS is surprising. Evidence confirms that immigrants to Britain use less health care services than most English-born persons.¹⁴² The evidence further suggests that immigrants are less likely to register with a GP.¹⁴³ One possible explanation is that immigrants lack information about how to register. If knowledge about using the NHS has been removed because immigrants should be expected to use the service without the need for practical guidance in a citizenship handbook, then this rationale may be undermined by the available evidence.

These questions raise serious concerns about the Government's decisions about which information should be included and which excluded. The test is presented as practical and useful, but much of its practical and useful information has been removed rendering the test more impractical than past editions.

Inconsistent

There are several inconsistencies in the third edition and its relation to past editions. For example, the second edition of the test saw the launch of a new *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide* with the words 'Study Guide' in larger font. This official *Study Guide* included 200 practice questions and answers to help applicants prepare for the test. The third edition rebrands this text as the *Official Practice Questions and Answers* text and the new edition launches a new text, the *Official Study Guide*. The launch of a very different text with the same name as an existing text for the second edition may create unnecessary confusion. This confusion is exacerbated by the fact that the original *Official Study Guide* and the very different new *Official Study Guide* both provide the most information about how to book and prepare for taking the test.

¹³² Ibid.,

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 67.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 68-69.

¹⁴¹ 85% is the reduction in sentences about education from 115 to 17.

¹⁴² See Adam Steventon and Martin Bardsley (2011), 'Use of Secondary Care in England by International Immigrants', *Journal of Health Services Research & Policy* 16(2): 90-94.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 93.

The new *Official Study Guide* incorporates information from both the handbook and the *Official Practice Questions and Answers*. The purpose of the *Official Study Guide* is somewhat unclear and problematic. The *Guide* states that it is 'designed to be used with' the official handbook.¹⁴⁴ The *Guide* says further that it 'offers a summary of the content' to help its readers 'learn the material' needed to pass the test.¹⁴⁵ The *Guide's* chapters and chapter subtitles follow the official handbook and no new information is introduced although there are images in the *Guide* (such as the chamber of the House of Lords)¹⁴⁶ that is not included in official handbook. Applicants must know information provided in the official handbook to pass the test. Much of the information in the handbook is not included in the *Official Study Guide*. It is unclear why the Government has approved for publication an 'official' book like this *Guide* which will not by itself prepare its readers satisfactorily for the test.

Another inconsistency is that the practice questions and answers in the *Official Study Guide* are different from those presented in the *Official Practice Questions and Answers* book. For example, the *Official Study Guide* asks 'Which TWO things do you need to apply for UK citizenship or permanent residency?' with the correct answers of 'An understanding of life in the UK' and 'To read and speak English' (and incorrect options of 'A knowledge of maths and science' and 'Access to a computer').¹⁴⁷ The *Official Practice Questions and Answers* asks: 'To apply for UK citizenship or permanent residency, which TWO things do you need?' with the correct answers of 'An ability to speak and read English' and 'A good understanding of life in the UK' (and incorrect options of 'A UK bank account' and 'A driving licence').¹⁴⁸ Several questions and answers are similar between these two texts.¹⁴⁹

It could be argued that these variations of how questions and answers are presented might benefit applicants. If no questions in either book are found presented exactly the same on the test, then perhaps applicants might benefit from engaging with a diversity of different ways that questions might appear on the test and so become better prepared. However, this is unlikely as such a view is not presented in either book and their differences are unacknowledged. Most strikingly, all questions for both books were written by Michael Mitchell so it is puzzling why such variety exists.¹⁵⁰

There are further inconsistencies about the information included in the handbook. For example, the third edition no longer requires applicants to know the number of Members of Parliament in Westminster. However, the handbook does require knowledge about the number of members in the Welsh Assembly, Scottish Parliament and Northern Ireland Assembly.¹⁵¹ There is no clear rationale to justify this difference. Another example of inconsistency is that applicants must know the telephone numbers to contact the House of Commons, the Welsh Assembly and

¹⁴⁴ Wales, *Official Study Guide*, p. 7.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁴⁸ Mitchell, *Official Practice Questions and Answers*, p. 124.

¹⁴⁹ On the Bill of Rights 1689 see Mitchell, *Official Practice Questions and Answers*, pp. 123, 128 and Wales, *Official Study Guide*, pp. 77, 80.

¹⁵⁰ Mitchell is listed as the author of the *Official Practice Questions and Answers* and acknowledged for writing all practice questions in Wales, *Official Study Guide*, p. 5.

¹⁵¹ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 136.

Scottish Parliament, but not the Northern Ireland Assembly.¹⁵² Furthermore, applicants are required to know about Magistrates' Courts, Justice of the Peace Courts, Crown Courts, Sheriff Courts, Youth Courts and County Courts.¹⁵³ However, the handbook omits mention of the UK Supreme Court. No rationale is provided or obvious for this omission. The five telephone numbers included in the handbook does not include 999 or 111.

Inconsistencies can be found in the use of quotations. The third edition handbook includes several quotations from plays and poetry, such as famous passages in the writings of William Shakespeare,¹⁵⁴ the poetry of Rudyard Kipling¹⁵⁵ and other poets.¹⁵⁶ However, only the quotations of three speeches by Winston Churchill – all made in 1940 – are presented in **bold** typeface.¹⁵⁷

Other inconsistencies concern British life and governance. The chapter subtitle 'Languages and dialects' states that 'The English language has many accents and dialects'.¹⁵⁸ Previous editions have highlighted specific dialects, such as Cockney, Geordie and Scouse.¹⁵⁹ The third edition notes that there are dialects, but omits any mention of what these dialects might be.¹⁶⁰ The chapter subtitle 'The government' notes that the Home Secretary is 'responsible for crime' and 'policing'.¹⁶¹ Later in this chapter, the handbook states that publically elected Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) 'are responsible for the delivery of an efficient and effective police force' and appoint local Chief Constables.¹⁶² No mention is made of the relationship between the Home Secretary and PCCs. Nor is there mention of the Justice Secretary. The chapter subtitle 'Respecting the law' provides information about 'examples of criminal laws' to confirm for applicants various crimes, including smoking in public places.¹⁶³ There is no mention of how to report a crime. Nor is there mention of individual rights upon arrest.

A final inconsistency concerns the images used in the handbook and supplemental texts. The *Official Study Guide* reproduces several images that are also found in the official handbook, such as the Giant's Causeway and the Lake District.¹⁶⁴ However, only the *Official Study Guide* provides any acknowledgement of photographic credits.¹⁶⁵ The official handbook does not acknowledge any photographic credits for the images reproduced in its pages.

¹⁵² Ibid., pp. 126, 136.

¹⁵³ Ibid., pp. 144-47.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 99-100.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 74.

¹⁵⁹ See Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, p. 52; Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, p. 37 and Home Office, *Official Citizenship Test Study Guide*, pp. 38, 43, 45.

¹⁶⁰ See Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 74.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 127.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 142.

¹⁶³ Ibid., pp. 140-41.

¹⁶⁴ See Wales, *Official Study Guide*, p. 101 and Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, pp. 111, 116.

¹⁶⁵ Wales, *Official Study Guide*, p. 5.

Gender imbalance

Women are much less visible than men in the official handbook. There are 29 men and only four women – Florence Nightingale, Emmeline Pankhurst, Margaret Thatcher, Mary Peters – listed with dates of birth or death in the chapter 'A long and illustrious history'.¹⁶⁶ Interestingly, neither of the Queen's birthdays are mentioned. Other women are mentioned, but primarily as the wives of more important husbands.¹⁶⁷ The most commonly found examples include monarchs, such as the wives of King Henry VII, King Henry VIII and William of Orange.¹⁶⁸ Sake Dean Mahomet is the only non-monarch whose wife is named: 'He then moved to Ireland and eloped with an Irish girl called Jane Daly'.¹⁶⁹ All other women noted are queens, such as Boudicca,¹⁷⁰ Mary, Queen of Scots,¹⁷¹ Queen Elizabeth I¹⁷² and Queen Anne.¹⁷³

Eleven men and six women are noted in sport and culture as well as 3 women for contributions as authors or writers.¹⁷⁴ There are no female musicians, artists or poets noted, but for men there are 7 musicians, 9 artists, 6 authors or writers and 5 poets noted.¹⁷⁵ Together, this adds up to 67 men and only 13 women. Former Turner Prize winners mentioned include Damien Hirst and Richard Wright.¹⁷⁶ There is no mention of Tracey Emin. Surprisingly, there is also no mention of L. S. Lowry.

The Home Office announcement on the launch of the new test celebrated the inclusion of artistic and cultural heritage. The Home Office said: 'the new test focuses on British culture, history and traditions as well as the events and people that have shaped Britain into the country it is today'.¹⁷⁷ The announcement notes nine men.¹⁷⁸ No women are mentioned.

Gender imbalance is a serious problem found in the new test where the achievements of men receive more prominence than those by women. Furthermore, the imbalance may be exacerbated by the omission of previously included information about childcare, maternity leave and schools. This is mitigated by the inclusion of information about laws against discrimination on the basis of several factors, including sex, pregnancy and maternity, sexuality or marital status.¹⁷⁹ There is also information about domestic violence, female genital mutilation and forced marriage.¹⁸⁰

¹⁶⁶ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, pp. 49, 51, 66, 67.

¹⁶⁷ The only exception is the Queen. See *ibid.*, p. 121.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 27, 36-37.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29, 31.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 84-100.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 99. Elizabeth Browning is listed alongside Robert Browning, but only the latter has his poetry included. All substantive discussion about poetry is about poems written by men and not women.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

¹⁷⁷ Home Office, 'New Life in the UK test goes live', 25 March 2013, url: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-life-in-the-uk-test-goes-live--2>.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 149-50.

Spurious facts

The handbook includes more than facts than are likely to be tested or should be tested. The third edition handbook contains about 3,000 facts.¹⁸¹ These facts include the 5 telephone numbers and 34 websites included in the handbook: there are no practice questions among the 600+ published that ask about telephone numbers and websites.

The official handbook notes about 278 dates. These include the Roman invasion of Britain, the start of the Black Death and the year of America's Independence. The dates of birth and death are given for about 77 people, including William Shakespeare, Isaac Newton, Florence Nightingale and William Beveridge. The persons with the most dates associated with their names are Margaret Thatcher (6), Sake Dean Mahomet (5) and Emmeline Pankhurst (5). Other historical dates include the year that the Roman Emperor Claudius invaded Britain (43 AD).¹⁸²

It does not appear that applicants must know, in fact, many dates of birth or death, if any. Neither the *Official Practice Questions and Answers* or the *Official Study Guide* includes questions that ask applicants for the date of any person's birth or death. Only a handful of people have dates of birth or death listed by their name in the *Official Study Guide*: Alexander Fleming¹⁸³, Dylan Thomas¹⁸⁴, Roald Dahl¹⁸⁵, Clement Atlee¹⁸⁶, William Beveridge¹⁸⁷ and R A Butler¹⁸⁸ – with no women noted. This evidence strongly suggests such questions are not part of the test.

The only date to be memorised is the year women first received the right to vote (1918).¹⁸⁹ There are two questions – about John Constable¹⁹⁰ and Robert Burns¹⁹¹ – that gives their dates of birth and death so applicants need not know them because they are given. The only dates to be memorised are the last year England was invaded successfully (1066)¹⁹² and year of D-Day (1944).¹⁹³

The official handbook claims that former Prime Minister Winston Churchill 'was voted the greatest Briton of all time by the public'.¹⁹⁴ This fact is noted as a true or false question in the *Official Practice Questions and Answers*. It is not included in the *Official Study Guide*.¹⁹⁵ Churchill receives the most treatment in the official handbook

¹⁸¹ See Revd Lord Roberts of Llandudno, HL Debate, 26 February 2013, c954.

¹⁸² Ibid. See Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 17. This fact about the Emperor Claudius is new to the third edition: it does not appear in the first two editions of the handbook. There is no mention in the *Official Practice Questions and Answers* or *Official Study Guide*.

¹⁸³ Wales, *Official Study Guide*, p. 67

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 69.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 72

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 69

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 75

¹⁹⁰ Mitchell, *Official Practice Questions and Answers*, p. 87.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p. 143.

¹⁹² Ibid., p. 87.

¹⁹³ Ibid., p. 137.

¹⁹⁴ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 57.

¹⁹⁵ Mitchell, *Official Practice Questions and Answers*, p. 57.

in terms of column inches and he is the only person with multiple quotations (and in bold). Churchill is the only person noted as ever having received such a distinction as the greatest Briton.

The claim that Churchill is 'the greatest Briton of all time' as voted for by the public may suggest that this is a representative view of the public. Closer scrutiny reveals several concerns. First, the claim is qualified by 'in 2002'.¹⁹⁶ This raises questions about the significance of such a vote at that time and whether this has sufficient importance for a test published over a decade later. Secondly, the official handbook provides no evidence for the claim that the public so voted in 2002. In fact, this appears to refer to a series of BBC television programmes. The public vote was by telephone: the public was charged for each vote and could vote as often as they wished or not vote at all. Ten people were pre-selected where each would have a special programme devoted to him or her and moderated by a media 'champion' with all proceeds to fund a permanent memorial to the winner.¹⁹⁷ The vote is unscientific and no confirmation about which person the public believes might be the greatest Briton. It is deeply concerning that the result of a pay-to-vote television contest over 10 years ago is touted as a sufficiently important moment in British national life that new residents are expected to know.

The third edition includes several poems by famous British poets. These are Robert Browning's *Home Thoughts from Abroad*,¹⁹⁸ Lord Byron's *She Walks in Beauty*,¹⁹⁹ William Wordsworth's *The Daffodils*,²⁰⁰ William Blake's *The Tyger*²⁰¹ and Wilfred Owen's *Anthem for Doomed Youth*.²⁰² No poems were included in previous versions of the test. Only men are mentioned. Applicants are required to know the name of the poet, his years of birth and death, the title of the poem and about four lines from that poem. For example, applicants must know that Lord Byron died in 1824,²⁰³ that 'host' is the missing word in Wordsworth's *The Daffodils* where it states 'A ____ of golden daffodils',²⁰⁴ and the fourth line in Owen's *Anthem for Doomed Youth* is 'Can patter out their hasty orisons'.²⁰⁵

The only questions in the *Official Practice Questions and Answers* about poets and their poems are a true or false question about 'William Blake, Lord Byron and Robert Browning were all famous golfers',²⁰⁶ a question about whether *Beowulf*, *The Tyger* and *She Walks in Beauty* is a poem, film, play or novel (answer: poems)²⁰⁷ and a question about where Dylan Thomas was from (answer: Wales).²⁰⁸ The *Official*

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ BBC News, 'Churchill voted great Briton' (24 November 2002), url:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/2509465.stm>. The top ten were (1) Churchill, (2) Brunel, (3) Diana, Princess of Wales, (4) Darwin, (5) Shakespeare, (6) Newton, (7) John Lennon, (8) Elizabeth I, (9) Nelson and (10) Oliver Cromwell. See BBC Press release, url:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressrelease/stories/2002/10_october/19/great_britons.sht.

¹⁹⁸ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 99.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 100.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Mitchell, *Official Practice Questions and Answers*, pp. 107, 110.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 54, 58.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 156, 160.

Study Guide notes that British poetry has 'a long tradition' and there is a Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey.²⁰⁹ The *Guide* does not include any poems and it gives no dates of birth or death for poets. It does list poets by century.

One problem with the *Official Study Guide* is that it states that applicants should 'find out' on their own the following information: first, they should discover examples of British poetry 'for each century since the Middle Ages'; secondly, they should be able to 'explain the inspiration' for British poetry; and, thirdly, they should know 'famous lines...written by Robert Browning, Lord Byron, William Blake and Wilfred Owen'.²¹⁰ The *Guide* lists poets by century, but this no such list appears in the corresponding handbook. The only centuries noted for poets in the handbook after the Middle Ages are the 19th and 20th centuries: the handbook does not identify poets writing in the 16th, 17th or 18th centuries in its section on 'British poets'.²¹¹ Since test questions come from the handbook and not the *Official Study Guide*, this suggests there are no questions on the test about the century in which poets wrote because this is largely absent in the handbook. While the *Official Study Guide* says nothing about the inspiration for different poets, the handbook notes only four sources of inspiration: 'religious views' (John Milton), 'nature' (William Wordsworth), 'Scotland' (Sir Walter Scott) and the First World War (Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sasson).²¹² Romantic poets, such as John Keats, Lord Byron and Percy Shelley are noted, but their sources of inspiration are not.²¹³

The *Official Study Guide* claims that applicants should know 'famous lines' by Browning, Byron, Blake and Owen, but says nothing about a 'line' is nor which should be learned.²¹⁴ The *Guide* lacks a glossary and index. 'Line' and 'poetry' are not included in the handbook's glossary and index, too. Poems by Browning, Byron, Blake and Owen are included in the handbook, but only about four lines from each.²¹⁵

The poet with the most lines (8) listed is Rudyard Kipling from his poem *If*.²¹⁶ There are no questions about Kipling in the *Official Practice Questions and Answers* or *Official Study Guide*. The *Guide* says of Kipling that he 'wrote books and poems reflecting the strengths of the Empire' and no more.²¹⁷ The handbook states the poem *If* 'has often been voted among the UK's favourite poems'.²¹⁸ There is no evidence provided to confirm this. The BBC ran a competition in 2009 to find Britain's favourite poet. This was won by T S Eliot and Kipling did not make the top ten.²¹⁹ However, *If* was selected in an earlier BBC competition conducted in 1995 as Britain's favourite poem.²²⁰ It is unclear why this earlier survey merited inclusion in the handbook, but not more recent indicators. Nor is it clear what other competitions

²⁰⁹ Wales, *Official Study Guide*, p. 98.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

²¹¹ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 99.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ Wales, *Official Study Guide*, p. 99.

²¹⁵ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, pp. 99-100.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

²¹⁷ Wales, *Official Study Guide*, pp. 61-62.

²¹⁸ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 52.

²¹⁹ BBC, 'The Nation's Favourite Poet Result', url: http://www.bbc.co.uk/poetryseason/vote_results.shtml.

²²⁰ See *The Independent*, 'Rudyard Kipling's "If" Voted Nation's Favourite Poem', 13 October 1995, url: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/rudyard-kiplings-if-voted-nations-favourite-poem-1577258.html>.

are reflected in the statement that *If* 'has often been voted' among the best British poems.

Britain's most famous author is William Shakespeare. He is listed in the *Official Study Guide* in the section 'Poets' as an author of 'sonnets' without further comment.²²¹ He is also included in the first and second editions of the handbook.²²² In its earlier chapter on British history, the *Guide* notes that Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon and his famous plays include *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *Romeo and Juliet*.²²³ Applicants are recommended to 'find out' on their own about the 'topics' his plays 'explore'.²²⁴ The handbook does not list Shakespeare in its list of 9 'notable authors and writers from Jane Austen to J K Rowling'.²²⁵ Shakespeare is mentioned in the chapter 'A long and illustrious history' which notes the famous plays mentioned above with a line from five works, such as 'To be or not to be' in *Hamlet* and 'The darling buds of May' from his Sonnet 18 ('Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day?' although the handbook incorrectly states this title without its question mark).²²⁶ Applicants would have to know more lines by all other poets whose poems are included in the handbook than lines by Shakespeare.²²⁷ However, Shakespeare receives the most attention in the *Official Practice Questions and Answers* with questions about the types of literature that made Shakespeare famous (plays, sonnets),²²⁸ that he wrote the lines 'To be or not to be',²²⁹ the types of genres that made Shakespeare 'famous for writing' (plays, poems)²³⁰ and the name of two plays he wrote (correct: *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet*; incorrect: *Pride and Prejudice* and *Oliver Twist*).²³¹

The available evidence suggests that the handbook requires applicants to know far more facts than appear in the tests. Telephone numbers, websites, dates of birth and death, the century in which poets wrote and lines from select poems are all among the about 3,000 facts found in the handbook and which may not appear in any test.

Mistakes and omissions

One mistake is the aforementioned omission of women that contributes to the significant gender imbalance found in the third edition. There are also typographical errors²³² and errors of omission, such as inclusion of phone numbers for the House of Commons, Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament, but not the Northern Ireland Assembly at Stormont in Belfast.²³³

²²¹ Wales, *Official Study Guide*, p. 99.

²²² See Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, pp. 20, 25 and Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, p. 14.

²²³ Wales, *Official Study Guide*, p. 46.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

²²⁵ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 98.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 99-100.

²²⁸ Mitchell, *Official Practice Questions and Answers*, pp. 15, 19.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 173, 178.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 165, 169.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 38.

²³² See Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 30: there should be a question mark at the end of 'Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day'. See also 'member of Parliament' and not 'Member of Parliament' in Mitchell, *Official Practice Questions and Answers*, p. 64.

²³³ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, pp. 126, 136.

Other mistakes include information about obtaining a National Insurance number. The previous test included a sample test which had a question about obtaining this number. The problem with the question with that the 'correct' answer became factually untrue, but remained part of the test. The third edition states that 'If you have permission to work in the UK, you will need to telephone the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to arrange to get a National Insurance number'.²³⁴ However, it remains true that applicants can phone Jobcentre Plus instead to acquire their number. The Government's website recommends Jobcentre Plus to acquire a National Insurance number.²³⁵ This website does not mention the DWP.

Glossary

The second edition of the handbook introduced a glossary at its end. The glossary covers over 413 terms over the last 31 pages.²³⁶ Terms included are 'Bank Holiday',²³⁷ 'devolution',²³⁸ 'first past the post',²³⁹ and 'liberty'.²⁴⁰

The third edition significantly reduces the glossary to 110 entries over seven pages, a reduction of about 73%.²⁴¹ The 303 terms that have been removed include 'academic course',²⁴² 'ante-natal care',²⁴³ 'assessment methods (education)',²⁴⁴ 'asylum',²⁴⁵ 'bursary',²⁴⁶ 'code of practice',²⁴⁷ 'contraception',²⁴⁸ 'disability',²⁴⁹ 'discrimination',²⁵⁰ 'divorce',²⁵¹ 'emergency services',²⁵² 'free press',²⁵³ 'harassment',²⁵⁴ 'higher education',²⁵⁵ 'immigration',²⁵⁶ 'legal aid',²⁵⁷ 'L-plates',²⁵⁸ 'maternity leave',²⁵⁹ 'mental illness',²⁶⁰ 'mortgage',²⁶¹ 'outpatient',²⁶² 'paternity

²³⁴ Ibid., p. 152.

²³⁵ HM Government, 'Get a National Insurance number', url: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-national-insurance-number>.

²³⁶ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, pp. 114-45.

²³⁷ Ibid., p. 117.

²³⁸ Ibid., p. 124.

²³⁹ Ibid., p. 127.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 132.

²⁴¹ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, pp. 164-70.

²⁴² Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, p. 116.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 117.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 119.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 121.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 122.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 124.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid., p. 125.

²⁵² Ibid., p. 127.

²⁵³ Ibid., p. 128.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 129.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 130.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 132.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 133.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid., p. 134.

²⁶² Ibid., p. 135.

leave',²⁶³ 'pressure group',²⁶⁴ 'racially-motivated crime',²⁶⁵ 'sick pay',²⁶⁶ 'torture',²⁶⁷ 'tuition fees',²⁶⁸ 'victim',²⁶⁹ and 'welfare benefits',²⁷⁰ amongst others.

Terms retained in the new edition include 'civil service',²⁷¹ 'constituency',²⁷² 'Houses of Parliament',²⁷³ 'to go on strike',²⁷⁴ 'terrorism',²⁷⁵ and 'volunteer'.²⁷⁶ Other retained terms are listed without capital letters (so no longer 'Bank Holiday', but 'bank holiday',²⁷⁷ although 'General Election',²⁷⁸ is capitalised in the third edition only. Some terms have been amended slightly, such as 'criminal offence' defined as 'an illegal activity...for which the criminal may be prosecuted',²⁷⁹ in the second edition has been changed to 'criminal law' as 'the legal system that deals with illegal activities',²⁸⁰ in the third edition.

New terms introduced in the third edition of the handbook include 'civil war',²⁸¹ 'House (history)' defined as 'a family (for example, House of York)',²⁸² 'illegal',²⁸³ 'medieval/Middle Ages',²⁸⁴ 'Pale (history)',²⁸⁵ 'Protestants' (note: Roman Catholics and other religious affiliations are not included although mentioned in the handbook²⁸⁶),²⁸⁷ 'rural',²⁸⁸ 'sonnet',²⁸⁹ and '*The Phone Book*'.²⁹⁰

The rationale provided for including terms is unchanged in the recent editions. The third edition states that the glossary 'will help readers to understand the meanings of key words that appear in this handbook'.²⁹¹ This is similar to what is stated in the second edition.²⁹² Many terms that have been excluded in the third edition relate to education, health care and housing. Their exclusion from the glossary is consistent with their absence from the main text.

²⁶³ Ibid., p. 136.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 138.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 139.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 142.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 143.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 144.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 145.

²⁷¹ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 165.

²⁷² Ibid., p. 166.

²⁷³ Ibid., p. 167.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 169.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 170.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 164.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 166.

²⁷⁹ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, p. 123.

²⁸⁰ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 166.

²⁸¹ Ibid., p. 165.

²⁸² Ibid., p. 167.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 168.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 76-77.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 169.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 169.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 170.

²⁹¹ Ibid., p. 164.

²⁹² Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 2nd edition, p. 115.

It remains unclear whether there has been some effort by the Home Office to investigate which terms should be included in the glossary to benefit applicants. Their presence appears linked only to their inclusion in the main text of the handbook. There is evidence noted above that there has been little, if any, consultation with new citizens who have immigrated. It would be useful to consult with these persons to learn more about how current information might be improved and perhaps expanded in general and, more specifically, the terms that could be more usefully included in a glossary of this kind.

Problematic consultation

There is a recent development. Dr Brooks has called on the Government repeatedly since 2011 in a BBC Radio 4 interview to consult with persons that have sat the test. One week before the publication of this report The Stationary Office (TSO) sent a brief online survey to persons who purchased the *Life in the UK* handbook and/or supplemental texts by email.²⁹³ The TSO publishes these texts. The 'Life in the UK Survey – 2013' asks questions, such as the person's first language, the reason for the decision to live in the UK (options include 'work permit', 'student' and a family member lives in the UK) and the resources used to find out information about the UK. There is also a further question about the topics that applicants found to be 'the most important as a new resident of the UK', listing employment and finding a job, studying/education, visas and work permits, housing, money and banking, health care, travel and transport, customs and traditions, entertainment and leisure, historical facts, religion in the UK, political system, culture and the arts, geography of the UK and places of interest. The brief survey concludes with a question about information not included in the handbook that should have been included.

This new development is welcome, but unsatisfactory. One problem is that it is unclear whether this survey accurately captures persons who have sat or plan to sit the *Life in the UK* test. The email appears to have been sent to all persons who purchased the *Life in the UK* handbook and/or supplemental texts. These persons might include persons planning to take the test, but also persons who purchased the test materials on behalf of others. The survey might be answered by persons unintended for inclusion. A second problem is that the survey can be answered more than once by the same person following the link sent. It is unclear how accurate this survey will be of its intended population. These problems raise serious concerns about the results from this survey. It remains important that the Government consider a more satisfactory consultation with persons who have sat the *Life in the UK* test. A third problem is that the survey would benefit from engagement with this report and its 12 recommendations. This would help ensure all serious concerns with the handbook and test are acknowledged and more likely to be addressed satisfactorily in a new, fourth edition of the *Life in the UK* test.

²⁹³ Personal correspondence received 6th June 2013.

CHAPTER FIVE

Problems with test design

There are problems with the design of the *Life in the UK* test that merit attention. The Home Office states that 'official questions are not published anywhere'. This prevents applicants from seeing exact questions in advance.²⁹⁴ There is now a website with test questions that offers some insight into what might be expected.²⁹⁵ All questions on this test are found in the *Official Practical Questions and Answers*.

It is difficult to confirm problems with the actual test questions because they have not been released to the public. Close scrutiny of the *Official Practice Questions and Answers* may offer some insight into potential problems with the test's design. One problem is the test appears to have been weighted with almost all questions relating to the last three chapters and about one-third about British history. This emphasis on some chapters over others is reflected in chapter lengths: most questions come from the last three chapters and these chapters make up a majority of the pages in the handbook. The second edition's *Official Citizenship Study Guide* contained equal numbers of questions for each chapter included in the test.²⁹⁶ So there is no clear problem with particular facts in each chapter having greater priority than others with the possible exception of the chapter 'What is the UK?' which is composed of only one page of text. Similarly, the *Official Study Guide* provides only 6 practice questions for the two shorter chapters that open the book and 20 practice questions for each of the remaining three chapters. The evidence strongly suggests that most questions on the test are taken from the three chapters that conclude the handbook.

There is a concern that much information included in the handbook is not, in fact, tested. The first chapter states that 'Questions are based on ALL parts of the handbook'.²⁹⁷ Applicants are advised: 'You need to make sure that you understand everything in the book'.²⁹⁸ There are several reasons to doubt this statement. The first reason is that the test might not then be about life in the United Kingdom, but rather the test's design. Strictly speaking, it is possible to construct a test based upon 'ALL parts of the handbook' that avoids any substantive engagement with the main information about British history, culture or governance. For example, questions could test whether applicants might recall from the handbook the postal address for The Stationary Office²⁹⁹, the names of chapters and their subtitles in the handbook, the date for the launch of a new English language proficiency requirement³⁰⁰, the number of questions on the test (24)³⁰¹, that the test will be different for each person taking it 'at that test session'³⁰², the number of test centres

²⁹⁴ See TSO Shop, 'What is the Life in the UK test?' url:

<http://www.tsoshop.co.uk/bookstore.asp?FO=1318813&TRACKID=002417>.

²⁹⁵ See The Stationary Office, 'Life in the United Kingdom: The Official Practice Test', url:

<http://www.officiallifeintheuk.co.uk/test/>.

²⁹⁶ However, it is unclear if there was any weighting used where some chapters would be covered more than others in individual tests.

²⁹⁷ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 10.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 11. Emphasis added.

²⁹⁹ Provided before table of contents in third edition.

³⁰⁰ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 9.

³⁰¹ Ibid., p. 10.

³⁰² Ibid.

in the UK (60)³⁰³, how to book the test online³⁰⁴, that applicants should 'read the instructions carefully' when booking the test³⁰⁵, that details should be entered 'correctly' when booking the test³⁰⁶, the kinds of identification required to sit the test³⁰⁷, the name of the book from which all test questions are based (*Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition)³⁰⁸, that 'check that you understand' boxes in the handbook 'are for guidance' and their knowledge 'will not be enough to pass the test'³⁰⁹, that the handbook is incomplete by design ('Of course, it is impossible for a book of this sort to cover everything')³¹⁰, the price of the handbook³¹¹, and that the handbook is 'the ONLY OFFICIAL handbook for the Life in the UK test'³¹², and information about which words are most popular in the index (the words 'colonies', 'franchise', 'nations comprising the UK' and 'right to vote' are referenced on six pages each).³¹³ It might then be theoretically possible for an applicant to sit a test composed of questions that cover neither British history nor culture or politics if the claim that 'everything in the book' may, in fact, appear on the test.³¹⁴

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., pp. 10-11.

³¹⁰ Ibid., p. 162.

³¹¹ This is found on the back cover.

³¹² This is found on the back cover.

³¹³ The most popular words found in the handbook's index are (by number of page number references): 6 (colonies, franchise, nations comprising the UK, right to vote), 5 (immigration, rights of women) and 4 (British Empire, Christianity, democratic nature of Parliament, House of Commons, Ireland in the 17th Century, Members of Parliament, Northern Ireland Assembly, patron saints, political parties, Prime Minister, religious festivals).

³¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 10-11.

CHAPTER SIX

English language proficiency requirement

It was widely reported that test had been 'tightened' to include a test of proficiency in English.³¹⁵ The Home Secretary, Theresa May, wrote in a letter to Keith Vaz MP that 'It would clearly be wrong for people to be able to become British citizens with a lower level of English than that expected from permanent residents'.³¹⁶

Language proficiency requirements are not unique in the United Kingdom. Similar requirements are found elsewhere, but with certain differences. For example, the United States requires an English test that covers three components: reading, writing and speaking.³¹⁷ There is a website containing online access to free materials, including reading vocabulary flash cards, writing vocabulary flash cards, reading test vocabulary test, vocabulary for the naturalization interview self-tests and much more downloadable files and video.³¹⁸

The statutory requirement that new citizens possess a satisfactory proficiency in English language has been in place since at least 1915.³¹⁹ The Home Office published its Statement of Intent to introduce changes to English language requirements for Indefinite Leave to Remain and citizenship in April 2013.³²⁰ This confirmed and expanded an earlier statement by the Home Secretary in June 2012 which first announced the intention that Indefinite Leave to Remain applicants would be required to pass an additional English proficiency test.

The April 2013 statement contains several errors. Only one of the nine footnotes listed is noted in the main text.³²¹ The footnotes are not in numerical order.³²² It is difficult to ascertain with certainty how each footnote links and provides specific support to particular claims made in the main text. Additionally, seven of the nine footnotes are identical and refer to itself without paragraph or page number.³²³ Each footnote appears once at the bottom of each page like a footer headline.

³¹⁵ BBC News, 'British citizenship test tightened to include English test', url: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-22158482>.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ See U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 'Study Materials for the English Test', url: <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.749cabd81f5ffc8fba713d10526e0aa0/?vgnextoid=4982df6bdd42a210VgnVCM100000b92ca60aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=4982df6bdd42a210VgnVCM100000b92ca60aRCR>.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ See s2 of the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act 1914 and s40(3) of the Borders, Citizenship and Immigration Act 2009. See also British Nationality (General) Regulations 2003, as amended, and *R (Bibi) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* [2013] EWCA Civ 322.

³²⁰ See Home Office (April 2013), 'Knowledge of language and life in the UK for settlement and naturalisation', Statement of Intent, changes to the requirement from October 2013', url: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/knowledge-of-language-and-life-in-the-uk-for-settlement-and-naturalisation-statement-of-intent>.

³²¹ See *ibid.*, page 5 note 2.

³²² The footnotes proceed in the following order: 1, 3, 4, 5, 2, 6, 7, 8, 9.

³²³ See *ibid.*, page 2 note 3, page 3 note 4, page 4 note 5, page 5 note 6, page 6 note 7, page 7 note 8, page 8 note 9. Each footnote is identical ('Knowledge of language and life in the UK for settlement and naturalisation – Statement of Intent, changes to the requirement from October 2013'). There are no page numbers in the document.

There are several exemptions. The first group exempted is for applicants that have passed the ESOL course. The new English language requirement is only applicable for persons who have passed the *Life in the UK* test and not ESOL.

A second group exempted is applicants that have 'obtained a degree taught in English'.³²⁴ This exemption is stated without further comment. The exemption requires further clarifications about which qualifications from which institutions will meet this test. For example, there should be clarity about whether such degrees must be accredited and, if so, by which regulatory bodies. Several non-British universities offer accredited degrees taught in English, including countries where English is neither the *de jure* nor *de facto* language, such as Hong Kong and the Netherlands. It could be possible for persons to become exempt from the new English language requirement after obtaining a degree taught in English from a country where English is not widely used.

A third group exempted are persons who are 'nationals of majority English speaking countries' are also exempt from the new English language requirement.³²⁵ Sixteen qualifying countries are listed in 'Annex A', including the Australia, Canada, Jamaica, New Zealand and United States.³²⁶ Two of these countries – Australia and the United States – have English as a *de facto*, but not *de jure*, official language. This list does not include all countries where English is the *de jure* official language, such as all countries in Africa and Asia including India, Kenya, Singapore and South Africa. The Annex notes that the Home Office 'will include the Republic of Ireland for naturalisation purposes and review whether any other actions are required' – the only such country singled out in this way.³²⁷

Further exemptions will continue for three more groups: children under 18, individuals aged 65 or older and persons with 'a physical or mental condition which severely restricts their ability to learn English and/or communicate and/or take the Life in the UK test'.³²⁸ The seventh and eighth groups exempted are 'adult dependent relatives' and 'retired persons of independent means'.³²⁹ A ninth group exempted are 'applications for settlement from spouses of British citizens or persons settled in the UK who have been victims of domestic violence or whose spouse has died'.³³⁰ A tenth group exempted are refugees and 'those with humanitarian protection'.³³¹ Many of these exemptions are longstanding.³³²

The Home Office states that 'for some people this will mean passing a relevant speaking and listening qualification for the first time'.³³³ It is nonetheless clear that this requirement will only affect a fairly circumscribed group of persons that fail to satisfy inclusion in any one of 10 exempted groups. The new requirement does not appear to limit the number of groups already exempted from satisfying an English

³²⁴ Ibid., page 4 (note: there are no page numbers in the document).

³²⁵ Ibid., page 4 (note: there are no page numbers in the document).

³²⁶ Ibid., page 8 (note: there are no page numbers in the document).

³²⁷ Ibid., page 8 (note: there are no page numbers in the document).

³²⁸ Ibid., page 5 (note: there are no page numbers in the document).

³²⁹ Ibid., page 6 (note: there are no page numbers in the document).

³³⁰ Ibid., page 6 (note: there are no page numbers in the document).

³³¹ Ibid., page 6 (note: there are no page numbers in the document).

³³² For example, see Immigration Rules, paras 287-89, HC 395 of 1993-94 as amended.

³³³ Ibid., page 7 (note: there are no page numbers in the document).

language requirement for permanent residency or naturalisation, such as persons aged 65 or older, although spouses and dependents may no longer be exempted.³³⁴

Furthermore, the Home Office presents contradictory information. It states 10 exempted groups that will not be required to satisfy the new English language test. But in its antepenultimate paragraph claims 'the only exceptions' are persons aged 65 or older, persons with a physical or mental condition severely inhibiting their ability to take the Life in the UK test and minors.³³⁵ This is contradicted by the Home Office's statements in the same document that several other groups, including persons from qualifying countries and persons obtaining degrees in English, are similarly exempted.

Finally, the successful completion of the *Life in the UK* has always been acknowledged as proof of satisfactory English language proficiency. This will continue to be the case until October 2013. However, the test is published in other languages, such as 'Welsh and Scottish Gaelic'.³³⁶ Anyone passing the *Life in the UK* test in either Welsh or Scottish Gaelic has also been exempt from the requirement of proving English language proficiency at ESOL Level 3.³³⁷ There are no plans to end this exemption. The *Official Study Guide* makes no mention that the test can be sat successfully in languages other than English. This is a mistaken omission.

The Government claims it will enforce a requirement of English language proficiency more stringently so that all new citizens possess a satisfactory knowledge about English. In fact, all new citizens need not possess such knowledge because they might either qualify for an exemption or pass the test in either Welsh or Scottish Gaelic without the need to prove knowledge of English language proficiency. This forthcoming requirement appears impractical and ineffective because of the several exemptions and contradictory statements.

³³⁴ See Damian Green MP, Minister of State (Immigration), HC Debate, 9 November 2010, c194W.

³³⁵ Ibid., page 7 (note: there are no page numbers in the document).

³³⁶ Home Office, *Life in the United Kingdom*, 3rd edition, p. 10.

³³⁷ See Schedule 2, the British Nationality (General) Regulations 2003 as amended.

CONCLUSION

Recommendations

The third edition of the *Life in the United Kingdom* test is in urgent need of reform. This report provides **12** recommendations that should be adopted in producing a new, fourth edition of this test.

1. The relevant texts should retain their reader-friendly format.

2. The test should retain its broad coverage. The inclusion of British history and culture is a welcome addition to the test's coverage. This report does not recommend the test cover additional or fewer areas.

3. Each edition should make clear the date from which it is the official source for the test. This will help avoid the problem of there being in circulation at the same time different handbooks published by the Home Office as the only 'official' sourcebook for use on the test.

4. All information for each edition of the test should be published concurrently. This will help avoid the problem of applicants failing to have relevant information before sitting the test. The recommendation is that the handbook and supplemental texts should be published at the same time rather than spread out over several months.

5. All test information should be consistent in their content and format. Current texts differ in information provided and its format. Greater care should be taken to ensure uniformity across related texts to avoid unnecessary confusion. This includes providing photographic credits where necessary.

6. All information should be revised to correct errors and omissions. There are typographical and other errors that should be corrected. There are also important omissions that should be addressed. Applicants should know the number of MPs and MEPs if they must still know the number of members in the Welsh Assembly, Scottish Parliament and Northern Ireland Assembly. Or there should be some clear rationale for this apparent inconsistency. Likewise, the UK Supreme Court should be included in a new, fourth edition if it remains required for applicants to know about other courts. Other omissions should be corrected as well. For example, if applicants should know there are regional dialects in the UK, then there should be some examples about them. Furthermore, if applicants should know specific telephone numbers or websites, this must include 999.

7. All information should be revised to address imbalances. There is a clear gender imbalance in the third edition that should be corrected in the next edition. Other similar imbalances should be investigated and corrected where found.

8. The official handbook should become a complete resource for information about the test. The *Life in the UK* test examines information presented in the official handbook alone. The information that will be tested, in fact, should be clearly presented. The official handbook should contain more information about the test format and what applicants might expect in terms of the kinds of questions asked and advice on test preparation. It should not be necessary to purchase additional

supplemental texts – as it is the case at present – to ascertain the test format and gain advice on test preparation.

9. The official handbook should include information that is not tested and clearly stated as such. Information that may be useful, but not required for the test should be included in the handbook, but clearly identified as such in a preface and/or appendix. This information includes the glossary, but also important telephone numbers, postal addresses and website. It might further include important historical dates and popular lines from British poets.

10. The imbalance between chapters should be corrected. Chapters are presented in widely varying lengths. This should be corrected in their redesign. This should be undertaken with a view towards each having greater equality of representation on the test. This change would overcome the current imbalance whereby an applicant need only study some chapters and not others to pass the test comfortably.

11. There should be a proper consultation with persons that have sat the *Life in the United Kingdom* test. No such effective consultation has appeared to take place. The very recent and brief survey from The Stationary Office is problematic and should be corrected. It might be useful to have evidence from applicants about their views. This could reveal unrecognized omissions or problems that should be addressed.

12. There should be more evidence found to inform the future of this test. The *Life in the United Kingdom* test has become an integral part of British immigration policy. But what purpose should it serve? What evidence can be found to support whether or not the test fulfils its purpose?

In conclusion, these recommendations illuminate how future tests should be redeveloped to overcome the several serious problems identified in this report. It is not recommended that the test be discontinued. The *Life in the UK* test can serve an important role for immigration purposes. However, the test can and should be improved. Furthermore, there should be greater clarity about what we want from the test and its use in British immigration policy.

ANNEX A

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Applicants for permanent residency or citizenship have one option to the *Life in the UK* test: this is the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) with citizenship certificate course.³³⁸ The course is offered at nationally accredited colleges across the UK where English language proficiency is taught in tandem with British citizenship. Successful applicants will meet the citizenship test requirement for Indefinite Leave to Remain and naturalisation. Topics covered include general British history, immigration issues, the changing roles of women in British society, multicultural diversity, the British constitution, and practical information about life in Britain including housing, finding and using local services, finding a doctor and information about schools and education.

The course entails much higher costs in time and resources for applicants. The *Life in the UK* test is completed in 45 minutes and costs £50. The ESOL with citizenship course requires a minimum of 20 hours undertaken by applicants and it may require at least 40 to 120 hours of study before an accredited college might test applicants and for successful candidates agree to submit a letter of confirmation for the Home Office. This can take anywhere from a week or two to three months or more to complete. Costs vary by college and by the time required to pass the certificate course with costs running from about £200 to £700 or more.³³⁹ The Home Office does not subsidize ESOL courses.³⁴⁰

The assessment is a speaking and listening test where applicants may be tested individually or in pairs lasting for 15 minutes with a pass mark of 66%.³⁴¹ Successful candidates must confirm proficiency in English language ability but need not know how to read and write.³⁴²

The Home Office recently announced that it intends to introduce provisions for individuals in the UK for 15 years with limited leave as a partner, child or parent (amongst other qualifying situations) to be exempt from sitting the *Life in the UK* test if they can 'produce evidence from a suitably qualified persons, for example a teacher of English for Speakers of Other Languages, that it is not reasonable to expect them to reach B1 English. We will consider where a similar provision should be introduced for those here on the basis of long residence or private life'.³⁴³

³³⁸ See UK Border Agency, 'ESOL course in English with citizenship', url: <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/britishcitizenship/applying/applicationtypes/naturalisation/kol/esol-with-citizenship/>.

³³⁹ See BSGS College, 'Callan Method Prices', url: <http://bsgs.org/callan/>; Metropole College, 'ESOL with Citizenship', url: <http://www.metropolecollege.com/index.php/english/esol/esol-with-citizenship>; New London College, 'ESOL for British Citizenship of ILR', url: <http://www.newlondoncollege.co.uk/index.php/test-centre/esol-citizenship>; Training Connect, 'ESOL with Citizenship', url: <http://www.trainingconnect.co.uk/esol-with-citizenship.php>. All websites accessed 12th May 2013.

³⁴⁰ Damian Green MP, Minister of State (Immigration), HC Debate, 14 February 2011, c515W

³⁴¹ See New London College, 'ESOL for British Citizenship of ILR', url: <http://www.newlondoncollege.co.uk/index.php/test-centre/esol-citizenship>. Website accessed 12th May 2013.

³⁴² See Flexilearning Centre Ltd., 'ESOL with Citizenship Course & Certificate', url: http://www.flexilearningcentre.co.uk/ESOL_CTZ_course.html. Website accessed 12th May 2013.

³⁴³ Home Office (April 2013), 'Knowledge of language and life in the UK for settlement and naturalisation', Statement of Intent, changes to the requirement from October 2013', p. 6 (note: there are no page numbers in the

document), url: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/knowledge-of-language-and-life-in-the-uk-for-settlement-and-naturalisation-statement-of-intent>.

ANNEX B

Test material costs

Title	Year published	Edition	Cost	Pages
<i>Life in the United Kingdom: A Journey to Citizenship</i>	2004	1	£9.99	146
<i>Life in the United Kingdom: A Journey to Citizenship</i>	2007	2	£9.99	145
<i>Official Citizenship Test Study Guide</i>	2007	2	£5.99	106
<i>Life in the United Kingdom: A Guide for New Residents</i>	2013	3	£12.99	180
<i>Life in the United Kingdom: Official Practice Questions and Answers</i>	2013	3	£7.99	180
<i>Life in the United Kingdom: Official Study Guide</i>	2013	3	£7.99	143

Annex C

Distribution of questions by chapter in *Official Practice Questions and Answers*

	Chapter: 'The values and principles of the UK'	Chapter: 'What is the UK?'	Chapter: 'A long and illustrious history'	Chapter: 'A modern, thriving society'	Chapter: 'The UK government, the law and your role'
Test 1	1	0	8	7	8
Test 2	1	1	8	7	7
Test 3	1	0	8	6	9
Test 4	1	1	8	7	7
Test 5	0	1	8	9	6
Test 6	1	1	8	7	7
Test 7	1	1	8	7	7
Test 8	1	0	8	7	8
Test 9	1	1	8	7	7
Test 10	0	0	8	8	8
Test 11	1	0	8	7	8
Test 12	1	1	8	7	7
Test 13	1	1	8	7	7
Test 14	0	1	8	9	6
Test 15	1	1	8	7	7
Test 16	1	0	8	10	5
Test 17	1	0	9	7	7

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